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# **Free Trade Versus Protection in the Early Third Republic: Economic Interests, Tariff Policy, and the Making of the Republican Synthesis**

*Michael S. Smith*

The founding of the Third Republic coincided with the creation of a particular political and economic arrangement which Stanley Hoffmann has variously called the “Republican synthesis” and the “Republican equilibrium.” This arrangement stabilized French society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, perhaps to the point of “stalemate,” but in any case it enabled the Third Republic to survive longer than any other French regime since 1789. Because it ultimately rested on the support of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry, its formation depended on forging those elements of society into a “Republican consensus” (again Hoffmann’s term) by the accommodation of their interests—that is to say, by the formulation of policies which preserved and enhanced their social and economic position.<sup>1</sup>

The process of accommodating interests and building the Republican consensus unfolded at several levels between the late 1860s and the 1890s.<sup>2</sup> From the beginning, the making of tariff policy was a crucial part of this process, especially for big businessmen and farmers. Yet it proved to be one of the hardest areas in which to reach an agreement. Contrary to conventional wisdom, there was no popularly mandated scuttling of Napoleon III’s free trade policies and no return to protection after 1870. To be sure, there was a noisy reaction

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<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann first articulated his conception of the Republican synthesis in *In Search of France* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 3-21. He subsequently refined it in *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York, 1974), pp. 403-12, 443-49.

<sup>2</sup> For an introduction to this process, albeit written from a different point of view and with a different vocabulary, see Sanford Elwitt, *The Making of the Third Republic: Class and Politics in France, 1868-1884* (Baton Rouge, 1975). This work is especially useful for defining the various policy areas—public works, education, economic policy, colonization—which were involved in the process of accommodation.

against the trade treaties, beginning even before the fall of the Second Empire and peaking under the presidency of Adolphe Thiers, but in a series of parliamentary battles, first in the Corps législatif and then in the National Assembly, this reaction was thwarted.<sup>3</sup> For the time being France remained under the existing system. However, the permanent orientation of policy under the Third Republic was still to be determined. Already, during the *réaction protectionniste* of 1868-1873, the major economic interests of the country had divided into two rival camps on this issue. On one side were the so-called free traders (*libre-échangistes*), who demanded, at the very least, the preservation of the trade treaties that had eliminated or greatly reduced duties on almost all imports; on the other side were the protectionists who demanded the abrogation of all trade treaties and the enactment of high import duties. Once mobilized, these two groups fought almost continuously for the next twenty years to decide if France would return to high protection, maintain the moderate free trade policies of Napoleon III, or even move toward more complete free trade. In doing so, they posed a serious obstacle to the creation of the Republican consensus. Indeed, it can be argued that such a consensus was possible only when the conflict between the free traders and protectionists was resolved. In any case, it should be clear that no one can fully understand the process of accommodation, the formation of the Republican consensus, and thus the establishment of the Republican synthesis without first understanding the conflict on tariffs—who was involved, what they represented, and how they settled their differences. To provide such an understanding is the purpose of this article.

Who exactly were the protectionists and free traders? This can be ascertained, with proper recognition of the people who actually participated in the conflict and with proper emphasis on the interests having the greatest weight and the largest stake in the matter, through an examination of the parliamentary blocs which emerged in opposition to, or support of, the trade treaties between 1868 and 1873. For, with certain exceptions, the structure and composition of each “party” established at that time remained intact throughout the struggle.

The protectionist bloc materialized in the Corps législatif during

<sup>3</sup> See Arthur Louis Dunham, *The Anglo-French Treaty of Commerce of 1860 and the Progress of the Industrial Revolution in France* (Ann Arbor, 1930), pp. 294-319, and my unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michael S. Smith, “Free Trade, Protection, and Tariff Reform: Commerce and Industry in French Politics, 1868-1882” (Cornell University, 1972), pp. 13-78.

the preparation of two interpellations against the trade treaties. The first of these, sponsored in April 1868 by four prominent protectionist spokesmen—Adolphe Thiers, Jules Brame and Charles Kolb-Bernard of Lille, and Augustin Pouyer-Quertier of Rouen—sought to discredit the treaties by linking them to the ongoing industrial depression. The second, sponsored by Brame alone in December 1869, sought to force the incoming Ollivier government to renounce the treaty with England. Both ultimately failed to alter French trade policy. However, sixty-three deputies—one fourth of the Corps législatif—signed one or both of the two interpellations. In the absence of formal party membership lists or useful roll call votes, their signatures represent the best available guide to the composition of the protectionist bloc in parliament and also give the best available indication of what interests were protectionist at the end of the Second Empire and at the outset of the Third Republic. As such, they form the basis of the following portrait of the protectionist “party.”<sup>4</sup>

In examining the signers of the interpellations, one is first struck by the relative absence of agriculturalists or their representatives. Only four signers of the 1868 interpellation had direct connections to agriculture: baron de Janzé, an important livestock breeder of the Côtes-du-Nord, Jules Brame and the baron des Rotours of the Nord, both of whom were involved in sugar beet cultivation, and François Malezieux of the Aisne, a Saint-Quentin lawyer and agronomist who wrote for the *Annales de l'agriculture française*.<sup>5</sup> Somewhat more agriculturalist deputies signed the 1869 interpellation, but many of France's most characteristically agrarian departments nevertheless remained unrepresented in the interpellations. In the case of those that were represented, mainly of northern and western France, the signatory often turned out to be an industrialist, not an agriculturalist.<sup>6</sup> All this indicates that in the late 1860s most of French

<sup>4</sup> The signatories of the 1868 interpellation were listed in the *Journal des économistes* (May, 1868), pp. 315-16; signatories of the 1869 interpellation were listed in the *Journal officiel de l'Empire français* (December 15, 1869), p. 1628. The geographical distribution of both is depicted on p. 310. These lists may be supplemented by the membership lists of the later protectionist lobby, the Association de l'industrie française, founded in 1878. An analysis of those lists yields a picture of the protectionist party very similar to the one developed here on the basis of the interpellations. Smith, “Free Trade, Protection, and Tariff Reform,” pp. 208-47.

<sup>5</sup> Here and throughout, the information on the economic interests of deputies is derived chiefly, but not exclusively, from Adolphe Robert, Edgar Bourlouton, and Gaston Cougny, eds., *Dictionnaire des parlementaires français*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1891).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Leclerc d'Osmonville, deputy for the Mayenne and signer of both interpellations, was a coal mine operator. Ernest Carré-Kerisouët, who signed the 1869 interpellation as deputy for the Morbihan, was a *maître de forges*.

agriculture was indifferent to the siren song of protectionism. Indeed the peasant farmers of the interior were still largely immune to foreign competition because of the incompleteness of the railway system and thus had no fear of trade treaties, while the commercial farmers of the periphery—the winegrowers of the Bordelais and Languedoc and the wheat growers of the West and North—were shipping more and more produce to foreign markets and thus benefitted from the trade treaties. Not surprisingly, the Société des agriculteurs, formed in 1868 to promote the interests of commercial agriculture, consistently supported the economic policies of the Second Empire, and its general secretary, Emile Lecouteux, repeatedly warned farmers against joining in any alliance with industrial protectionists.<sup>7</sup> Most were following his advice at the end of the sixties and would continue to do so until the agrarian crisis of the early eighties.

At the outset of the Third Republic, the real strength of protectionism therefore lay in industry, which is not to say that all industrialists were protectionists. Further examination of the signers of the interpellations reveals that most were linked to mining, metallurgy, and textiles and, most specifically, to certain subdivisions of those industries located primarily in northern France, in an arc from Normandy to Alsace, and secondarily in central France.

Within mining and metallurgy, it was particularly the coal and coke iron industries of the North and the charcoal iron industry, politically important in the East, which supported tariff protection and supplied backers for the interpellations. The coal and iron producers of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais faced stiff competition from the British and the Belgians locally and in the Paris market and, quite naturally, the deputies drawn from their midst, including Thiers and Félix Lambrecht of Anzin, René Hamoir and August Stiévenart of Valenciennes, and Alexandre Pinart of the Marquise ironworks (Pas-de-Calais), took the lead in attacking the treaties. Equally prominent in this attack were various representatives of the *fer au bois* industry, led by baron Lespérut of Saint-Dizier. They and other *maîtres de forges* who smelted or refined iron with charcoal were plagued by fixed or rising production costs in an age of falling prices, and they unanimously favored a return to high protection as a means of keeping prices up.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, there was no unanimity on

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Emile Lecouteux, "Les traités de commerce et les tarifs," *Journal d'agriculture pratique*, 1869 (2), p. 903.

<sup>8</sup> On the plight of the charcoal iron industry in the 1860s, see Bertrand Gille, *La sidérurgie*

the issue of tariffs and trade treaties among the mining and metallurgical enterprises of central France. Some of the most technologically advanced companies of the region, including Le Creusot and Terrenoire, found that the trade treaties opened up new markets for them in Central Europe. Indeed, they were coming to depend on those markets for sale of their principal products—rails and railroad equipment—in the late sixties. Consequently their directors supported the treaties at that time, and would continue to do so until the late seventies. Other firms of the region, however, could not or would not enter these foreign markets and continued to depend on domestic markets. Since, from their point of view, the trade treaties only served to open those markets to foreign competition, their directors, as deputies, favored renunciation of the treaties. These included Louis-Jules Chagot of Blanzay, Christophe Mony of Commentry-Fourchambault, and Pierre Dorian of J. Holtzer et C<sup>ie</sup>.<sup>9</sup>

The second major group involved in the interpellations and in the protectionist party consisted of certain textile manufacturers: flax and hemp spinners, the *draps* makers of Elbeuf and Sedan, and above all the cotton manufacturers of Normandy, the Nord and the East. Because of their vulnerability to British competition, the *filateurs* and *tisseurs de coton* of Normandy and the Nord had long been committed to high protection and were implacable foes of the trade treaties from their inception. Naturally those of them sitting in the Corps législatif, including Pouyer-Quertier and Eugène Cosserat of Amiens, supported the campaign against the trade treaties in 1868-70. So, too, did virtually all other representatives of the cotton districts of Normandy and the Nord, whether or not they had personal ties to cotton. Likewise, almost all representatives of Normandy and the Nord in parliament later on, from the late seventies to the turn of the century, would continue to participate in the protectionist bloc under the leadership of Pouyer-Quertier and Richard Waddington of Rouen.

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*française au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva, 1968), pp. 216-22, 233-79. See also the testimony before later parliamentary *enquêtes* of Honoré Reverchon and Paul Aclocque, who succeeded Lespérut as chief spokesmen for the industry in the 1870s. Sénat, *Procès-verbaux de la Commission d'enquête sur les souffrances du commerce et de l'industrie et sur les moyens d'y porter remède* (Versailles, 1878), pp. 307-12, 326-28, and Chambre des députés, Commission du tarif général des douanes, *Procès-verbaux des séances* (Paris, 1878), pp. 464-70.

<sup>9</sup> These firms' specific grievances against the trade treaties depended, of course, on their specific circumstances. J. Holtzer et C<sup>ie</sup>, for example, specialized in the making of high quality steel for cutlery and armaments. In the 1860s it was competing with Sheffield in supplying steel to the Cherbourg arsenal, which naturally contributed to Dorian's opposition to the treaty with England. Holtzer dossier, AN F<sup>12</sup> 5169. For the overall response of the *grandes sociétés métallurgiques* to the trade treaties, see Gille, *La sidérurgie française*, pp. 229-32.

In both periods in both regions, it would have been political suicide to do otherwise.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to the unanimous support for tariff protection found in the cotton industries of western and northern France, the cotton industry of eastern France was divided on the tariff at the end of the Second Empire. While spinners and weavers in the East were typically protectionist, the cloth printers of Mulhouse, who had founded and long controlled the industry, imported cloth and yarn from abroad and exported finished *indiennes* and therefore favored free trade. Under the leadership of Jean Dollfus, they managed to keep Alsace and the neighboring departments on the side of the government and its trade treaties through 1868. As a result, the only deputies of the region to sign the 1868 interpellation were J-B Lefébure, a calicot manufacturer, and Renouard de Bussière and the baron de Coehorn, Strasbourg bankers heavily invested in cotton spinning. Between the spring of 1868 and the spring of 1869, however, the political balance in Alsace shifted dramatically. Threatened by economic depression and the resultant worker unrest, the spinners and weavers successfully engineered the election of a protectionist slate to parliament in a bitter campaign in May 1869.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, the Alsatian legislative delegation, which had all but ignored the 1868 interpellation, signed Brame's interpellation en masse in December 1869. Of course, later when Alsace was lost and the center of gravity of the eastern cotton industry shifted from Mulhouse to the spinning and weaving towns of the Vosges, its commitment to protection deepened, and the representatives of the industry in parliament, especially Jules Méline, increasingly played a leading role in the attack on the trade treaties.

This turn of events in eastern France certainly reflected a broadening of protectionist sentiment within the French cotton industry and meant that, by the early 1870s, the segments of that industry in northern France, from Normandy to the Vosges, were unified in opposing free trade policies. However, other segments of the cotton industry and, most importantly, other whole textile industries—notably silk and worsteds—did not follow their lead but rather stood firmly by the trade treaties. Thus it must again be

<sup>10</sup> For the economic basis of protectionism in these segments of the cotton industry in the 1860s, consult Claude Fohlen, *L'Industrie textile au temps du Second Empire* (Paris, 1956). For a glimpse of the later activities of industrialists and politicians of the Nord and Normandy in the matter of the tariff, consult Sénat, *Procès-verbaux de la Commission d'enquête* and Chambre des députés, Commission du tarif général des douanes, *Procès-verbaux des séances*.

<sup>11</sup> F. L'Huillier, "Une bataille économique au sein de la bourgeoisie industrielle sous le Second Empire," in *La Bourgeoisie alsacienne* (2nd ed. Strasbourg, 1967), pp. 427-29.

emphasized that, while the protectionists drew their support mainly from industry, they hardly represented all industrialists, even within mining, metallurgy, and textiles.

If the preceding analysis shows that the protectionist party was narrower in its composition and more limited in its appeal at the outset of the Third Republic than is usually thought, a similar analysis of the free trade party shows that it was broader in its appeal and more diverse in its composition than is usually thought. (Actually, most historians have ignored its existence altogether.) The basis for such an analysis is found in the membership of a parliamentary caucus, the Réunion des députés partisans de la liberté commerciale, which was formed under the auspices of the Société d'économie politique in 1871 to resist Thiers's attempt to effect a return to high protection. The membership of the caucus amounted to only twenty or thirty deputies at its first meeting in April. However, by August, when Thiers's plans for the raw materials tax and the renunciation of the trade treaties had surfaced, it had risen to 180, and it remained at that level henceforth, as indicated in the roll call votes on various facets of the tariff question in 1872. Its composition is perhaps best revealed in the vote on a motion against trade treaty renunciation made by Nathaniel Johnston, deputy for Bordeaux, in February 1872. An examination of the 196 deputies who supported Johnston's motion, when combined with the information in the published accounts of the early meetings of the caucus, allows one to reconstruct the personnel, leadership, and interests of the free trade party in the early 1870s.<sup>12</sup>

Any discussion of the membership of the free trade caucus and of the party as a whole must surely begin with the Parisians and the Lyonnais. With Léon Say, deputy for the Seine, serving as president of the caucus; with Henri Germain, head of the Crédit Lyonnais and deputy for the Ain, serving as vice-president; with Eugène Flottard, deputy for the Rhône, serving as secretary; and, moreover, with some

<sup>12</sup> On the early meetings of the caucus, sources are *Annales de la Société d'économie politique*, IX (1871-72), 54ff, and G. Renaud, "Les nouveaux impôts discutés à la réunion des députés libre-échangistes," *Journal des économistes* (February, 1872), p. 232. The roll call vote on the Johnston motion—the geographical distribution of which is shown on page 311—appeared in the *Journal officiel de la République française* (February 2, 1872), pp. 763-64.

In addition, the picture of the economic interests in the free trade party, drawn here from their parliamentary representatives, is confirmed by an analysis of the membership of the free trade lobby, the Association pour la défense de la liberté commerciale, formed to offset the appearance of the protectionist lobby in 1878. See its membership list in AN F<sup>12</sup> 6385, reproduced in Smith, "Free Trade, Protection, and Tariff Reform," pp. 411-12.



twenty-five deputies of the Seine and Seine-et-Oise and over thirty deputies of the Rhône and its six neighboring departments voting in favor of Johnston's motion, it is clear that the caucus and the party turned on a Paris-Lyon axis.

The Parisian contingent in the caucus was actually made up of three different groups. One consisted of "radical" Republican politicians who, even as they rejected the Second Empire as a political system, continued to support its tariff policy to hold down consumer prices, especially on foodstuffs, for their working and middle class constituents. Their leader was Léon Gambetta, whose views on tariffs were spelled out from time to time throughout the seventies in the *République française*.<sup>13</sup> Also influential were Pierre Pascal-Duprat, who vigorously defended the trade treaties in 1872, and Pierre Tirard, who would eventually play a key role as commerce minister in the renegotiation of the trade treaties in 1881.<sup>14</sup> However, others in this group, such as Louis Blanc and Henri Brisson, gave most of their attention to issues other than tariff and thus remained on the fringes of the caucus, their participation known only by their presence in the pro-trade treaty column in roll call votes. Consequently, the Radicals were not nearly as important for the activities of the caucus as was a second group of Parisian free traders, the professional economists.

As disciples of Adam Smith through J-B Say and Adolphe Blanqui, the French political economists found in the various *grandes écoles* and faculties of Paris had naturally long supported free trade on principle. Moreover, they had long been acting on these principles. Since the 1840s they had campaigned tirelessly in the press and learned journals, through organizations like the Société d'économie politique and through their positions in parliament and other government bodies, to bring about the liberalization of French economic policy.<sup>15</sup> These efforts, of course, had culminated in the reforms of the 1860s, and in the early 1870s many veterans of this campaign were still active, trying to preserve and broaden these reforms. They included Joseph Garnier, editor of the *Journal des économistes*, Hippo-

<sup>13</sup> The *République française* was particularly outspoken on economic issues in the spring of 1878. See the editorials in the issues of May 19, 21, and 30, and June 3. These were probably drafted by Maurice Rouvier, the paper's economic specialist, but they undoubtedly reflected Gambetta's views. J. P. T. Bury, *Gambetta and the Making of the Third Republic* (London, 1973), p. 58.

<sup>14</sup> An early version of Tirard's free trade views, molded by his involvement in the jewelry business, is found in Pierre Tirard, *Liberté du commerce. Du développement de la bijouterie et de l'orfèvrerie par la liberté des titres de l'or et de l'argent* (Paris, 1868).

<sup>15</sup> This campaign may be traced in the monthly issues of the *Journal des économistes*, the "official" publication of the political economists after 1842.

lyte Passy, the long time president of the Société d'économie politique, Louis Wolowski, professor at the Conservatoire des arts et métiers, and, of course, Michel Chevalier, professor at the Collège de France and father of the Anglo-French trade treaty. These, in turn, were supported by a rising new generation of political economists, which included Chevalier's son-in-law, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, professor at the newly opened Ecole libre des sciences politiques, Louis Passy, Hippolyte's nephew and Wolowski's son-in-law, an economic journalist and politician, and Emile Levasseur, soon to replace Wolowski at the Conservatoire. Within the National Assembly and the free trade caucus, the group was represented by Wolowski, deputy for the Seine, and Louis Passy, deputy for the Eure, but real leadership of the group would soon pass to Leroy-Beaulieu who after 1873 served as editor of the *Economiste français*, the free traders' new organ of propaganda.

The third and probably the most important group of Parisians in the free trade caucus consisted of capitalists in international trade, finance, and transport. By the 1870s Paris was firmly established as a center for the import of foreign commodities into France, for the transshipment of central European goods moving westward, and especially for the export of various French manufactures. These manufactures ranged from the luxury items and novelties known collectively as *articles de Paris*, which ranked as France's fourth leading export in 1869,<sup>16</sup> to the heavy railroad equipment constructed by the Société des Batignolles at Saint-Ouen for customers worldwide. Naturally the merchants, merchant-bankers, and industrialists who presided over this diverse trade, such as Henri Fould and Ernest Gouïn,<sup>17</sup> wanted to keep tariff barriers low, both at home and abroad, and they therefore strongly supported the trade treaties throughout the 1870s through the Chamber of Commerce of Paris.<sup>18</sup> In this they were joined by the owners and managers of France's railroad and steamship companies, including Adolphe d'Eichthal and the Pereire brothers, who also operated out of the capital. These men were free

<sup>16</sup> Emile Levasseur, *Histoire du commerce de la France*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1911-12) II, 755.

<sup>17</sup> Henri Fould, head of Fould Frères, *commissionnaires en marchandises*, exported about 15 million francs' worth of *articles de Paris* per year, approximately one-tenth of all French exports of those items. Fould dossier, AN F<sup>12</sup> 5148. As head of the Société des Batignolles, Ernest Gouïn was exporting railroad locomotives and tenders to Brazil, the Austrian Empire, and other countries. Moreover, because much of the iron and steel for the manufacture of those items was being imported duty-free under the *admissions temporaires* system, he had two reasons to support the existing tariff policy. Gouïn et C<sup>e</sup> dossier, AN F<sup>12</sup> 2582.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, the resolution of August 16, 1877, Chambre de commerce de Paris, *Avvis* (Paris, 1878), pp. 149-225.

traders because, in many cases, they too were involved in international trade as merchant bankers and because, in all cases, they realized that the success and profitability of French transport depended at that moment on expanding long-haul (i.e., international) traffic.<sup>19</sup> But whatever the specific reasons, it is obvious that Parisian enterprise in all its variety—commerce, banking, transport, manufacture for export—benefitted from and was committed to the economic policies of the Second Empire. It is therefore not surprising that the Paris capitalists in the National Assembly joined the free trade caucus. These included the financiers Alfred André, deputy for the Seine, and Léopold Javal, deputy for the Yonne; Eugène Caillaux, administrator of the Chemin de fer de l'Ouest and deputy for the Sarthe; and, of course, the president of the caucus, Léon Say, grandson of the founder of French political economy, son of a leader of Parisian *haut commerce*, and himself a director of the Compagnie du chemin de fer du Nord.<sup>20</sup>

As in Paris, free trade was good business in the industrial and commercial complex of the Rhône and its neighboring departments, which centered on Lyon and, secondarily, on Saint-Etienne. All the major sectors of this region's economy were represented at Versailles and in the free trade caucus. From textiles came Nicolas Ducarre, a *drap* manufacturer and a deputy for the Rhône; from banking and international trade came Eugène Flottard, an administrator of the Banque de France branch at Saint-Etienne, and three directors of the Crédit Lyonnais: Henri Germain, Alexandre Jullien (deputy for the Loire), and J-B Ferrouillat (Var). Flottard and Jullien also represented the mining and metallurgical interests of the region, as did Adrien de Montgolfier, deputy for the Loire and the future director of the Forges et aciéries de la Marine.

Textile manufacture was the area's biggest industry. Lyon and its environs produced various forms of *tissus de soie* and *tissus mélangés*; ribbon was woven around Saint-Etienne; Tarare and Roanne produced renowned muslins. All this production was geared to foreign markets, especially the English and American. Indeed, some 350 million of the 460 million francs' worth of silks manufactured around Lyon in 1873 were sent abroad, thereby constituting by far France's

<sup>19</sup> The growing dependence of the railroad companies on international trade, which fostered their interest in free trade, was also reflected in their efforts to set up a rate structure that would allow them to capture international, long-haul traffic. See Andre Lefèvre, *Sous le Second Empire: chemins de fer et politique* (Paris, 1951), pp. 119-68.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Valynseele, *Les Say et leurs alliances* (Paris, 1971), pp. 61-66.

single most valuable export.<sup>21</sup> Naturally the trade treaties, particularly the treaty with England, were considered indispensable for preserving these foreign sales. They were also considered indispensable because the textile industries imported most of their raw materials. Since the silkworm blight hit the Rhône valley in the 1850s, Lyon had received most of its silk from the Orient, while the fine cotton yarn woven into Lyon's *tissus mélangés*, Saint-Etienne's ribbon, and Tarare's muslin came from England after 1860. Consequently, by keeping French duties on these materials at a minimum, the trade treaties served to keep production costs low and thus to maintain the industries' competitive edge in the world market and their high profits. Not surprisingly the textile manufacturers continued to support the treaties zealously in the 1870s.<sup>22</sup>

The tariff system of the Second Empire was no less important to the merchant bankers of the region, most of whom started as *marchands de soie* and continued to run Lyon's lucrative silk trade in the 1870s, but who, since the 1860s, had increasingly invested in growth industries such as coal, gas, chemicals, and metallurgy.<sup>23</sup> Curiously, while most mining and metallurgical concerns elsewhere in France opposed the trade treaties, those in the Loire-Rhône area benefitted from them, so that the Lyonnais capitalists who were becoming involved in coal, iron, and steel found that these interests reinforced rather than undercut their free trade tendencies. One can cite in this regard the case of the Compagnie des fonderies et forges de Terrenoire, la Voulte, et Bessèges. Reorganized in 1859, infused with Lyon money, and refurbished with Bessemer converters, Terrenoire had become one of France's largest producers of steel by 1867, at the very moment when the domestic market for steel rails—Terrenoire's principal product—was contracting.<sup>24</sup> As a result, it found itself dependent on foreign markets, especially in Switzerland and Italy, in

<sup>21</sup> "La Fabrique lyonnaise de soieries," *L'Economiste français* (July 5, 1873), pp. 320-23; Levasseur, *Histoire du commerce*, pp. 755-771.

<sup>22</sup> For the position of the textile manufacturers on tariff policy, see Pariset, "La Chambre de commerce de Lyon au dix-neuvième siècle," *Mémoires de l'Académie de Lyon*, XXVII (1890-91), 1-254; L-J Gras, *Histoire de la Chambre de commerce de Saint-Etienne* (Saint-Etienne, 1913), pp. 175-78; and the depositions of the chambers of commerce of Tarare, Saint-Etienne, and Lyon to the Chamber Tariff Commission in *Journal officiel* (May 23, 1878), pp. 5611-15; (May 27, 1878), pp. 5820-24; (June 22, 1878), pp. 6931-36; (June 28, 1878), pp. 7120-22.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Bouvier, "Aux origines du Crédit Lyonnais: le milieu économique et financier lyonnais au début des années 1860," *Histoire des entreprises*, VI (November, 1960), 41-64.

<sup>24</sup> L. Babu, "L'industrie métallurgique dans la région de Saint-Etienne," *Annales des mines*, ser. 9, XV (1899), 399-420; Comité des forges, *La Sidérurgie française, 1864-1914* (Paris, n.d.), p. 142; Deposition of Alexandre Jullien, Conseil supérieur du commerce, *Admissions temporaires* (Paris, 1877), pp. 48-49.

the early 1870s. In these circumstances the company's head, Alexandre Jullien, as a member of the free trade caucus in 1872, naturally sought to preserve the trade treaties. To be sure, one must note that the economic downturn of the late 1870s would destroy the delicate balance of forces which originally brought the mining and metallurgical interests of the Loire and the southern Massif into the free trade movement and that consequently Alexandre Jullien, among others, would defect to the protectionist camp after 1877. Nevertheless, up until that time the metallurgists, along with most other capitalists in the Lyon sphere of influence, continued to support the trade treaties and a liberal tariff policy.<sup>25</sup>

Beyond Paris and Lyon there was strong support for the economic policy of the Second Empire in the major wine producing and wine exporting regions of France, notably in the Côte d'Or and the Hérault, two departments whose representatives in the Assembly voted solidly against renunciation of the trade treaties in 1872, and, even more, in the wine region of the Southwest, including the departments of the Gironde, Lot-et-Garonne, Charente, and Charente-Inférieure. Indeed these departments, together with the Landes, Gers, Basses- and Hautes-Pyrénées, furnished some thirty-six votes in favor of the Johnston motion and thereby constituted a bloc within the free trade party equal in size to that of either Paris or Lyon. Of course, the center of this region was Bordeaux, which, because of its involvement in international trade as France's third largest seaport as well as because of its position in the export of wine, had long harbored free trade sentiments. It was there that Bastiat, Wolowski, and others had launched the first national free trade association in 1845. In the 1850s the Bordeaux chamber of commerce had lobbied vigorously for tariff liberalization, and in 1860 it had offered crucial backing to Chevalier in the negotiation of the treaty with England.<sup>26</sup> In the early 1870s it remained steadfast in its support of the trade treaties,<sup>27</sup> while Bordeaux's delegates to the National Assembly, especially Nathaniel Johnston, Adrien Bonnet, and duc Elie Decazes, emerged as vocal leaders of the free trade caucus.

Another port city committed to free trade was Marseille. In the early 1870s it was France's busiest port, importing East European

<sup>25</sup> L-J Gras, *Histoire économique de la métallurgie de la Loire* (Saint-Etienne, 1908), pp. 141-48.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Charles, "Le Rôle du grand commerce bordelais dans l'évolution du système douanier français de 1852 à 1860," *Revue historique de Bordeaux*, IX (1960), 65-88.

<sup>27</sup> Chambre de commerce de Bordeaux, *Voeux exprimés de 1872 à 1879 au sujet des tarifs douaniers, des traités de commerce, du commerce extérieur, et de la marine marchande* (Bordeaux, 1880).

grain, Algerian ore for the blast furnaces of the Massif, and raw silk for the spinners and weavers of the Rhône, while exporting Languedoc wines and Lyon silks. Just as important, Marseille was becoming industrialized. Chemical plants, oil distilleries, sugar refineries, soapworks, flour mills, iron smelters, tanneries, shipyards, and other processing and construction industries were appearing so rapidly as to give the city a boom-town atmosphere. "[In] a hundred places, even within the city itself which dares not complain," one visitor wrote in 1877, "clusters of smokestacks taller than obelisks belch forth smoke that blackens the sky and fouls the air. All-conquering industry spreads everywhere and has overrun the entire coastline."<sup>28</sup> Because these new industries depended on imported raw materials, Marseille's rising industrialists relied on strong commercial ties with foreign countries and on continuation of low duties on imports just as much as did Marseille's established merchant class. Thus, as indicated in the public statements of the chamber of commerce,<sup>29</sup> virtually all the capitalists of the area supported the trade treaties and, reflecting this, the legislative delegations of the Bouches-du-Rhône and the Var, led by Alexandre Clapier and Adolphe Fraissinet, added their weight to the free trade caucus in 1872.<sup>30</sup>

The trade treaties received additional support from other sources. The worsted and combed wool industries of Reims, Fourmies, and Roubaix, in contrast to the domestically oriented woollens industries of Elbeuf and Sedan, sent much of their output abroad. Indeed, their *laine* and *tissus de laine* comprised France's second

<sup>28</sup> Louis Simonin, "Les grands ports de commerce de la France: Marseille et le golfe de Lyon," *Revue des deux mondes* (July 15, 1877), p. 394.

<sup>29</sup> See its responses to the questionnaires of the minister of commerce (1875), the Chamber tariff commission (1878), and the Conseil supérieur du commerce (1890) in AN F<sup>12</sup> 2487A, C 3223, and F<sup>12</sup> 6916, respectively.

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that, while Bordeaux and Marseille actively supported free trade, two other major ports—Nantes and Le Havre—did not. In the age of steam navigation, Nantes did not play the role in maritime commerce that Marseille did; nor did it have a commodity to export as Bordeaux did. Rather it was dominated by *armateurs* and shipbuilders who, in their search for government subsidies, became allies of the industrial protectionists in the course of the 1870s. Consequently, when its chamber of commerce spoke on commercial policy, it tended to oppose free trade. See Louis Simonin, "Les grands ports de commerce de la France: Nantes et la bassin de la Loire," *Revue des deux mondes* (November 15, 1877), pp. 409-36, and the deposition of Babin-Chevaye, president of the Nantes chamber of commerce, in Sénat, *Procès-verbaux de la Commission d'enquête*, pp. 441-47.

Unlike Nantes, Le Havre did have a thriving maritime commerce in the 1870s and played host to merchants with free trade sentiments. However, as the main port of entry for raw cotton, it was closely tied to France's—and especially Normandy's—cotton industry. For fear of undercutting that industry, its chamber of commerce was reluctant to endorse free trade, particularly in the realm of manufactures. Simonin, "Les grands ports de la France: Le Havre et le bassin de la Seine," *Revue des deux mondes* (February 15, 1878), pp. 834-72.

largest export in 1869. Consequently, the leaders of this industry such as Jules Warnier of Reims, deputy for the Marne, resisted the protectionism typical of the textile industries of northern France and continued to support the trade treaties.<sup>31</sup> Support came also from certain Alsatian industrialists, like Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, who migrated to Paris in 1871 and joined the free trade caucus as deputy for the Seine, and Gustave Steinheil of Steinheil-Dieterlin of Rothau, who migrated a shorter distance and entered the caucus as a deputy for the Vosges. Scheurer-Kestner was a free trader partly because of his background in the Mulhouse *patronat* and partly because of his close association with Léon Gambetta, but mostly because of personal economic interests. He needed to maintain access to the French market for the sulphuric acid he continued to manufacture in Alsace.<sup>32</sup> In the same vein, Steinheil favored free trade to preserve the arrangement by which cloth and yarn manufactured in the Vosges were sent to Alsace for finishing and then returned to France for marketing.<sup>33</sup> And a similar need to maintain economic relationships across newly drawn political frontiers undoubtedly accounts for the high degree of support for the trade treaties that the deputies of the Meurthe-et-Moselle and the Haute-Savoie displayed in the vote on the Johnston motion.

Finally there was agriculture, both domestic and colonial. With agricultural exports continuing to rise in the early 1870s,<sup>34</sup> the Société des agriculteurs continued to back the economic policies of the Second Empire, while in the National Assembly representatives of various agricultural departments—the Eure, Oise, Yonne, Maine-et-Loire, Indre-et-Loire, Sarthe, Loir-et-Cher—stood with the agricultural economist, François Ducuing, deputy for the Hautes-Pyrénées and a member of the free trade caucus, in support of the trade treaties. So, too, did the delegates of France's overseas possessions,

<sup>31</sup> As a center of cotton spinning as well as of wool combing, Roubaix was ambivalent on the trade treaties. It is significant, however, that Jules Deregnaucourt, the mayor of Roubaix, voted to support Johnston's motion against the renunciation of the treaties in 1872 and was the only deputy of the Nord to do so.

<sup>32</sup> Testimony of Scheurer-Kestner, *Chambre des députés, Commission du tarif général des douanes, Procès-verbaux des séances* (Paris, 1879), pp. 527-29.

<sup>33</sup> This interdependence of the Vosges and Alsace did not continue for long, however. As early as December, 1871, a joint-stock company was formed by Vosgian and Alsatian industrialists, led by Steinheil, to undertake the transfer of part of the Alsatian bleaching and dyeing industry to Thaon-les-Vosges. When the Blanchisseries et teintureries de Thaon opened its doors in 1875, the symbiosis of the two textile industries formally ended, and the previously mentioned movement of Vosges textilists, including Steinheil, into the protectionist camp accelerated. A. Lederlin, *et al., Monographie de l'industrie cotonnière* (Epinal, 1905), p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> Agricultural exports were worth 1,179,803,000 francs in 1872, compared to 669,469,000 francs in 1860. J. Clavé, "La Situation agricole de la France," *Revue des deux mondes* (January 15, 1880), p. 412.

represented in the caucus by François de Mahy of Réunion. Algeria, Sénégal, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, as well as Réunion, had all benefitted from the liberalization of the colonial tariff system in 1866. Moreover, they all resented the imposition of a tax on *denrées coloniales* in 1871 and feared further attempts to reimpose restrictions on their trade with France and other countries. Their representatives were therefore virtually unanimous in resisting the renunciation of the trade treaties in 1872 as part of a broader effort to uphold the trade policy of the Second Empire.

This analysis of the personnel and interests of the free trade party, when compared with the earlier analysis of the protectionists, reveals that at the root of the conflict over tariff policy in the early Third Republic was a split among divergent economic interests possessing correspondingly divergent views on France's future economic development and on its proper economic relationship with the rest of the world. The free trade party included some ideologues acting on the basis of liberal principles. However, free traders were more typically capitalists involved in international commerce—the *grands négociants* and financiers of Paris, Lyon, and the ports, railroad and shipping magnates, manufacturers and agriculturalists producing for export—who not only welcomed the reforms of the 1860s but also looked forward to and even depended on the continued integration of France into the emerging world market of the late nineteenth century. The protectionists, on the other hand, were those capitalists—especially certain textile and metallurgical manufacturers—who, for a variety of reasons, could not compete in the international market and therefore depended on local or regional markets and looked forward to the creation of a truly national market in France to serve as a privileged preserve for their production. In essence, then, the split between free traders and protectionists was a split between outwardly directed commercial capitalists seeking international economic integration and inwardly directed industrial capitalists seeking national self-sufficiency.

In addition to involving a conflict among capitalists with differing interests and orientations, the struggle over the tariff also involved to some extent a conflict between different regions of France. The signers of the protectionist interpellations of 1868 and 1869 were not drawn from all parts of the country but represented only twenty-eight departments which formed, in turn, four distinct clusters. Five departments of northern France—the Nord, the Somme, Pas-de-Calais, Aisne, and Ardennes—constituted one of these clusters. Another consisted of various departments of Brittany and Nor-



mandy, of which the Seine-Inférieure was most prominent. Seven departments of eastern France—the Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Moselle, Vosges, Doubs, Haute-Saône, and Haute-Marne—made up the third cluster. Almost all the other signers of the interpellations came from a fourth less well defined cluster of departments scattered across the Massif Central from the Côte d'Or to the Aveyron. In contrast, the free traders came primarily from the Seine, the Southwest, the Southeast, and the colonies, and secondarily from the Center, as the vote on the Johnston motion indicated. Their geographic base was thus not mutually exclusive with that of the protectionists—there was overlap in the Loire, for example—but on the whole it was strikingly complementary. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2.)

This geographical cleavage may have been merely the by-product of the way the various interests and enterprises in the free trade and protectionist camps happened to be distributed through France. But perhaps it amounted to more than that. In this cleavage one may well be confronting on the economic level the same split between provincial, "small town" France and the cosmopolitan urban complexes of Paris, Lyon, and the major port cities that was dramatically manifested on the political level in the fight between Thiers's "national" government and the loosely allied communes of Paris, Lyon, and Marseille in 1871.<sup>35</sup> In any case, the conflict over the tariff, at the very least, reinforced whatever suspicions and rivalries existed among the various cities and regions which found themselves on opposite sides of the issue in the 1870s.

It should now be obvious that the contest between the free traders and protectionists posed a serious political problem for the Third Republic in that it presented a major obstacle to bringing the leaders of all regions of France and of all sectors of its economy together in a single, national "Republican consensus." Both sides represented interests with considerable economic and political clout. Any regime which supported one of them at the expense of the other—and thus included one in the consensus while excluding the other—would necessarily have alienated an important segment of the French capitalist community and would have thereby prejudiced its chances of survival. By the same token, any regime which could

<sup>35</sup> In *Sisters of Liberty: Marseille, Lyon, Paris, and the Reaction to a Centralized State, 1868-1871* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), Louis M. Greenberg presents an account of this struggle, focussing rather narrowly on the issue of centralization versus decentralization. For insight into the role of geographical cleavages in the political and economic development of France in the nineteenth century, see Edward W. Fox, *History in Geographic Perspective: the Other France* (New York, 1971).

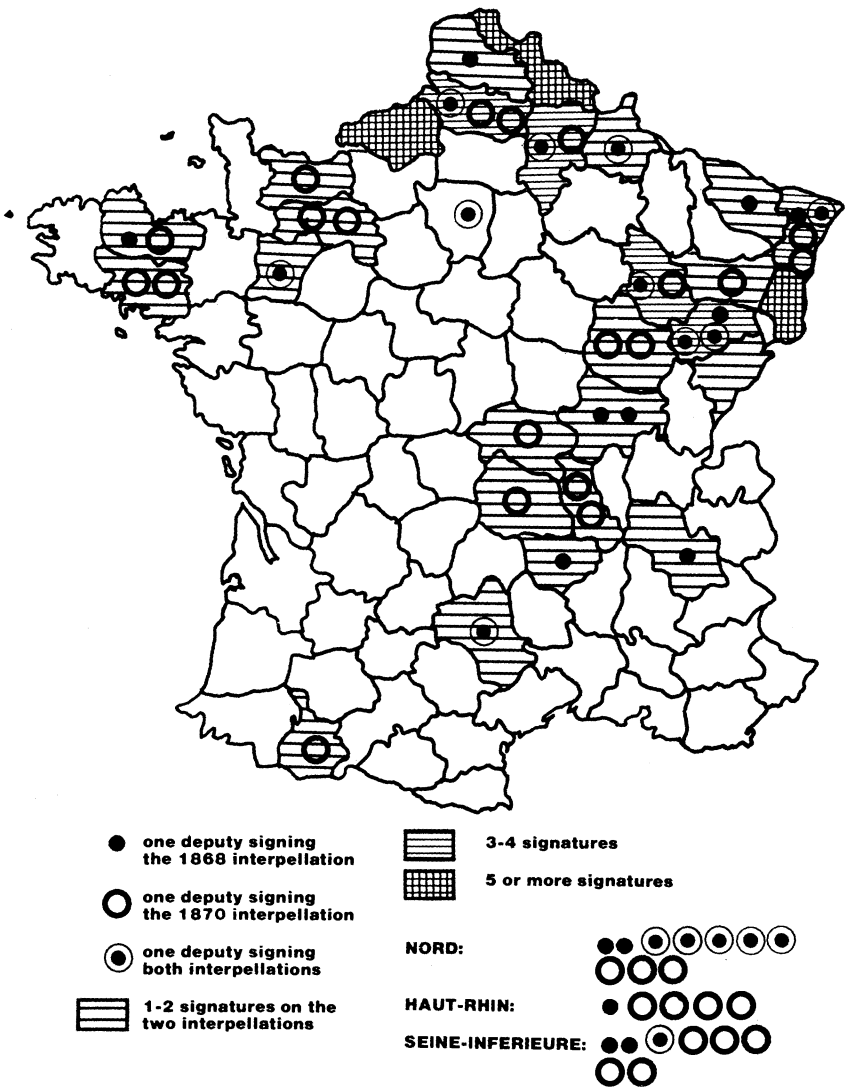
somehow accommodate both sides and could thus include both in the consensus would have taken a giant step toward solidifying its support and assuring its long-term existence. It was a triumph for the early Third Republic that it consciously or unconsciously pursued and ultimately succeeded in the latter course of action.

By the 1890s, the political leaders of the Third Republic had substantially resolved the tariff question in such a way as to accommodate most of the major interests in both the free trade and protectionist parties, thereby assuring their allegiance to the Republican system. Because this process of accommodation proved to be long and convoluted, it cannot be recounted in detail here. Suffice it to say that it unfolded in two distinct stages. The first stage, 1877-1882, centered on the renunciation of the old trade treaties, the legislation of a new general tariff, and the negotiation of new trade treaties. It resulted less in a compromise than in an outright victory for the free traders. Capitalizing on the continued support of agriculture—or at least on the inability of industrial protectionists to form a lasting alliance with agricultural protectionists—and capitalizing as well on their entrenched position in government,<sup>36</sup> the free traders overcame the growing parliamentary strength of the protectionists and in 1881 won approval of a moderate general tariff that substituted duties based on the conventional duties in the trade treaties for the prohibitory duties remaining on the books from the pretreaty era. Then, in gaining ratification of new trade treaties, they replaced all of those duties, except those on agricultural products, with a new conventional tariff which by and large perpetuated the duties in effect since 1860. In this manner, the reforms of 1881-82, far from re-establishing protection—as most textbooks still suggest they did—actually ex-

<sup>36</sup> Free traders held at least one of the three cabinet posts most influential in the making of commercial policy—finance, commerce and agriculture, and foreign affairs—in every government between 1873 and 1882, while none of these posts was ever held by an active protectionist in the same period. The most prominent of the “ministerial” free traders in this era were three veterans of the free trade caucus: duc Elie Decazes, who served as foreign minister continuously from November 1873 to November 1877; Léon Say, France’s only finance minister from March 1875 to December 1879 (except for the brief tenure of Eugène Caillaux, another alumnus of the caucus, in the *Seize Mai* cabinet); and Pierre Tirard, minister of commerce and agriculture from March 1879 to July 1882, but for the hiatus of Gambetta’s “Grande Ministère.”

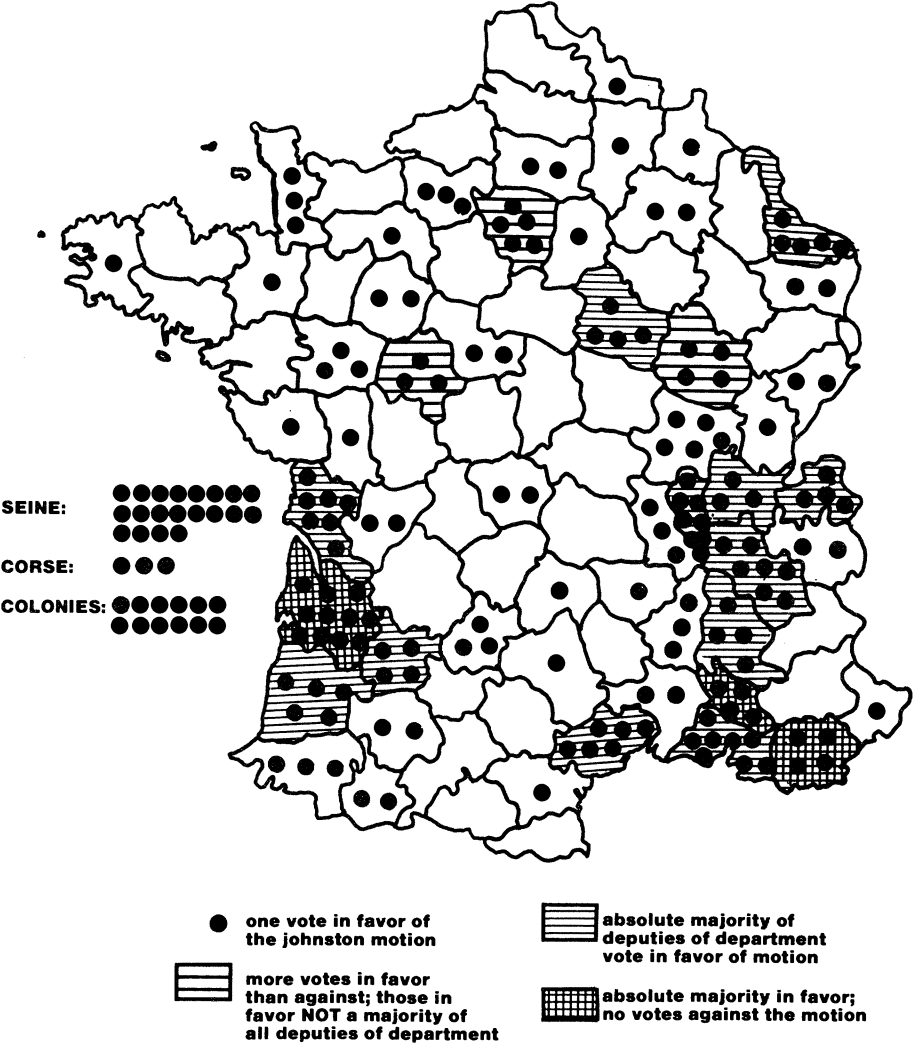
In addition to the free traders’ domination of ministerial positions, it must be noted that most of the career civil servants who ran the *bureaux* of the various ministries in the 1870s and many other government experts (who were often more influential in the making of policy than the ministers, themselves) were products of, and holdovers from, the Second Empire and were sympathetic to its policies. This was the case, for example, with Jules Ozenne, secretary of the commerce ministry and director of foreign trade, and Léon Amé, *directeur général des douanes* and the government’s top advisor on tariffs. Both insisted that tariffs could still be used as a source of revenue but should not serve to stifle trade or unduly protect domestic industry. See Léon Amé, *Etude sur les tarifs de douane et sur les traités de commerce* 2 vols. (Paris, 1876), I, 531-34.

FIGURE 1  
THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROTECTIONISTS  
IN THE CORPS LÉGISLATIF



Sources: Requests for interpellations on the trade treaties, 1868 and 1869; *Journal des économistes*, May, 1868, pp. 315-16; *Journal officiel de l'Empire français*, December 15, 1869, p. 1628.

FIGURE 2  
THE GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF FREE TRADERS  
IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



Source: Vote in favor of Johnston's motion reserving the question of trade treaty renunciation; *Journal officiel*, February 2, 1872, pp. 763-64.

tended the free trade system of the Second Empire for ten more years.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately for the free traders, they were not able to preserve this victory in the midst of changing economic and political circumstances at home and abroad after 1882. For one thing, in response to economic depression more and more countries in Europe and worldwide were renouncing their commercial conventions in the 1880s in order to return to high protection, and this inevitably undercut the free trade system in France. After all, trade treaties—the backbone of free trade in the nineteenth century—could not be maintained unilaterally. Secondly, within France, the balance of interests, which had tended to favor the free traders in the 1870s, became increasingly favorable to the protectionists in the 1880s, when interests once committed to free trade, especially in agriculture, switched sides in the face of mounting foreign competition, and the place of the remaining free trade interests in the French economy—for reasons which cannot be dealt with here—declined relative to that of protectionist interests.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the free traders' erstwhile monopoly of policy-making positions in government disappeared when provincial protectionists, increasingly at home in Paris and in the parliamentary system, began to accede to cabinet posts in the 1880s. For example, the ministries of commerce and agriculture, which remained in free trade hands from 1873 to 1882, fell into the

<sup>37</sup> Comprehending the meaning of the tariff reform of 1881-82 depends on comparing the general and conventional duties in effect from 1860 to 1880, found in Jules Clère, *Les tarifs de douane. Tableaux comparatifs* (Paris, 1880), with the duties established by the general tariff of 1881 and the trade treaties of 1882, found in *Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée*, XI (1882), 502ff.

It must be noted that the protectionists did get some benefits from the reforms of 1881-82. In addition to exempting agricultural duties from the trade conventions and thus allowing higher agricultural duties to be legislated as the need arose, the new system converted all *ad valorem* duties to fixed "specific" duties—that is to say, henceforth French duties were to remain constant, instead of fluctuating with prices. This meant that, in an era of falling prices, the import price (price at port of entry plus import duty) of goods coming into France would fall more gradually than world prices in general, which in turn meant that domestic producers would get more of a buffer against falling world prices and more protection against foreign competition under the new system than they would have gotten under the *ad valorem* system. This, of course, was not as beneficial as a direct increase in the level of import duties, but it was better than nothing.

<sup>38</sup> This changing balance is revealed in what happened to *tissus de soie*, the foremost free trade manufacture, and *filés de coton*, the foremost protectionist commodity. As indicated in T.J. Markovitch's table XVI (*Cahiers de l'I.S.E.A.*, AF VI [June, 1966]), the value of the average annual production of *tissus de soie* (exceeded that of *filés de coton* in 1865-74, 461 million francs to 451 million francs. In the succeeding period, however, the two were even: the average annual production of both declined to 291 million francs. Then, in 1885-94, *filés de coton* forged ahead—330 million francs versus 295 million francs—and it would remain ahead thereafter. So, whereas silk cloth had greater economic importance in the 1860s and 1870s (in terms of the value of its production), cotton spinning had become more important by the 1880s and 1890s.

hands of avowed protectionists, such as Pierre Legrand, Auguste Dautresme, and Jules Méline, with growing frequency after 1882. Aided by all these developments, the protectionists thus succeeded in the second stage of the tariff battle in replacing both the general tariff of 1881 and the conventional tariff of 1882 with a sterner two-tiered schedule of duties embodied in the so-called Méline tariff of 1892.

Historians have invariably seen the Méline tariff as the final step in the inevitable return to protection in France after the fall of the Second Empire. While the Méline tariff did represent a definite swing away from the free trade policy of 1860-82 toward protection, it is important to note that the new tariff did not return France to the pre-1860 system of prohibitory duties but, in fact, represented, especially in the realm of industrial tariffs, something of a compromise between the interests of protectionists and free traders (although the exultation of the former and the lamentations of the latter in 1891-92 have obscured this point). The new law raised duties on most agricultural products, most finished consumer goods, and those semi-finished goods, such as jute, linen, and cotton yarn and cloth, produced by industries reputed to be particularly hard pressed by foreign competitors. However, duties remained the same on many other producer and consumer goods, including coal and coke, most forms of iron and steel, and woollens (that is, the new minimum duty on these items equalled the old conventional duty). Moreover, even in cases where protection was increased, the law often provided loopholes to benefit big domestic importers. Thus the system of *admissions temporaires*, whereby duties were refunded on imported goods which served as raw materials for the manufacture of export goods, was maintained on all items to which it had previously applied, including wheat. This preserved the position of the Marseille milling industry, which had depended on the importation of east European grain since its founding in the 1860s. A similar arrangement, allowing 60 per cent of the duty on cotton yarn to be refunded if it were used to make cloth for export, saved the ribbon and *tissus mélangés* manufacturers of the Rhône and Loire from the full effects of increased protection for French cotton spinners.<sup>39</sup>

This compromise was in part an unplanned and unforeseen product of the give-and-take of rival interests in the parliamentary arena in 1890-91. But it was also a product of the conscious desire of both business leaders operating from below and national political

<sup>39</sup> For the various articles of the tariff law, plus the schedule of duties, see the *Bulletin de statistique et de législation comparée*, XXXI (1892), 12-34, 187ff.

leaders operating from above to find the middle ground between absolute free trade and ironclad protection and to avoid the kind of one-sided (and thus politically dangerous) solution to the tariff question embodied in the reforms of 1881-82. This desire for compromise and accommodation was manifested as early as 1878, when the leaders of the Saint-Etienne and Marseille chambers of commerce, because of the nature of the interests under their tutelage, demanded a measure of protection for some producers but, at the same time, recommended the maintenance of the existing trade treaties.<sup>40</sup> More importantly, the Freycinet government and especially its minister of commerce, Jules Roche, exhibited this desire in guiding the tariff bill through parliament in 1891. As Roche later asserted, it was the government's intention "to conciliate, as much as possible, the diverse interests present" in the matter of the tariff. "France," he continued, "is at once an agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial country, and it is important for the development of its national genius as well as for its [national] strength to sacrifice none of the major elements of its life and prosperity."<sup>41</sup>

The success of this effort to strike a balance between free trade and protection and thereby to accommodate all parties to the issue is attested not only by the stipulations of the tariff law and by the self-congratulatory statements of its architects, but also by the survival and continued prosperity of all the major interests and, more clearly still, by the abatement of the long struggle between free traders and protectionists after 1892. To be sure, disagreements on tariff policy did not completely disappear. However, they no longer monopolized the attention of the interests as they had from 1860 to 1892. Having achieved a workable compromise, those formerly divided between the free trade and protectionist blocs increasingly cooperated in ventures of mutual benefit, such as colonial expansion. Moreover, they joined together in successfully defending the Republic, which now guaranteed the economic position of all of them, against the menace of those excluded from the Republican consensus, urban workers in particular. In this manner, the tariff, which had been an obstacle to the creation of the Republican synthesis for twenty years, became a key factor in preserving that synthesis well into the twentieth century.

<sup>40</sup> See the depositions of the Marseille and Saint-Etienne chambers of commerce to the Chamber tariff commission (1878) in AN C 3223 and C 3224, respectively.

<sup>41</sup> Address at Marseille, October 9, 1891, in *Chambre de commerce de Marseille, Comptendu des travaux pour l'année 1891* (Marseille, 1892), p. 369.